



CITY OF  
Abbotsford

# MILL LAKE ACTION PLAN UPDATE



Prepared by

*CATHERINE BERRIS ASSOCIATES INC.*

August 2003



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1.0 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Context .....	1
1.2 Study Process .....	2
1.3 Goal .....	2
1.4 Issues .....	3
2.0 PARK PROPERTY ACQUISITION .....	6
3.0 PARK DEVELOPMENT .....	7
3.1 Guiding Principles .....	7
3.2 Park Development Recommendations .....	8



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Client

### City of Abbotsford

- Carolyn Girard and Valoree Richmond, Parks Planners
- Mark Taylor, Parks and Recreation Director

## Steering Committee

### City Representatives

- Ed Fast, Councillor and Parks and Recreation Commission Chair
- Chris Gain, MSA Arena
- Carolyn Girard, Parks Planner
- Wayne Gordon, Planning
- John Laframboise, Parks
- Mark Taylor, Parks and Recreation Director
- Stan Wong, Properties

### Community Representatives

- Kris Folds
- Roz Francis
- Bjorn Lauridsen
- Lindsay Macpherson
- Sylvia Pincott
- Nancy Moore

## Consultant

### Catherine Berris Associates Inc., Planning and Landscape Architecture

- Catherine Berris, Project Manager
- Robert Lilly, Landscape Architect
- Heather Breiddal, Graphics Assistant

We would like to thank the City of Abbotsford staff, Council and Parks and Recreation Commission for their guidance throughout the project, and the public who attended the public meetings and provided comments.

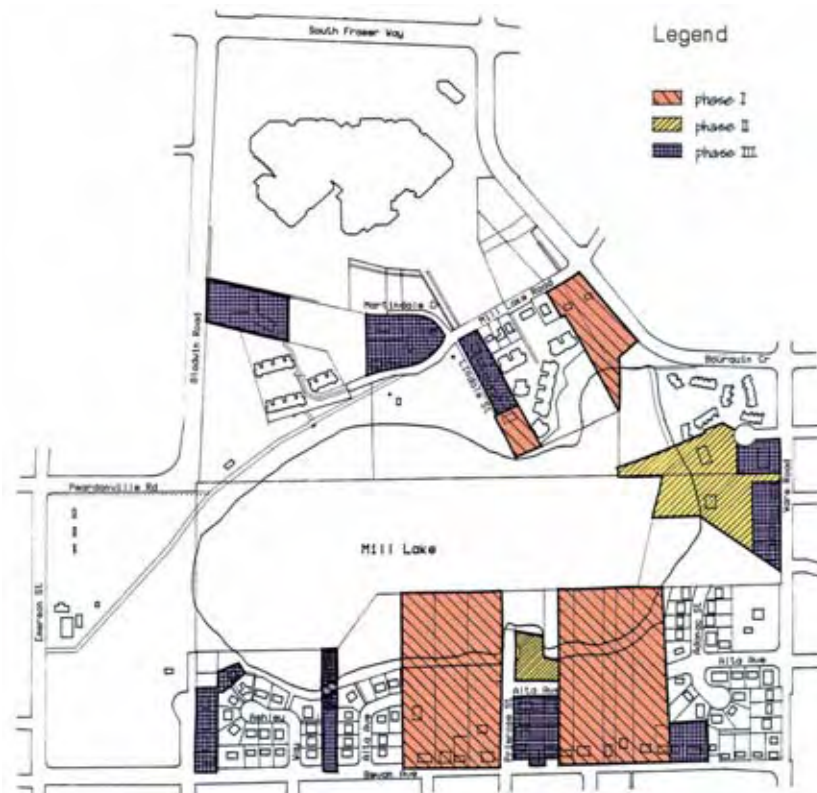


# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Context

The Mill Lake/Centennial Park Development Study was prepared by Catherine Berris Associates Inc. in 1987. That study included an inventory and analysis of the resources around Mill Lake, alternative plans for the park, and a park development plan including recommendations for property acquisition and park development. There was an extensive consultation process involving interviews with interest groups, a park user survey, and a public meeting. Many of the recommendations in that plan have been implemented.

In 1996, the Mill Lake Action Plan (draft) was prepared by Catherine Berris Associates Inc. to update the 1987 study. The objectives of that plan were to review and update the park acquisition plan, and to prepare an overall park schematic plan to direct future efforts. The consultation process for that draft plan included: meetings with an Abbotsford staff committee, contacts with the primary interest groups, a public open house, and presentations to Council. The Mill Lake Action Plan was not adopted, primarily due to uncertainty regarding the future location of the M.S.A. Museum.



**Mill Lake/Centennial Park Acquisition Plan from 1987**

The purpose of this 2003 Mill Lake Action Plan Update is to further update the park acquisition plan and to provide a conceptual park development plan based on current land use and ownership, existing use patterns, water quality information, and information received from interest groups and the public. The plan guides acquisition and development for the next 15 years. It is intended that the plan will be adopted by Council, which will facilitate the process of property acquisition. It should be noted that this plan is not a complete park Master Plan. Additional design work will be required to address site-specific requirements.

## **1.2 Study Process**

The process for this study began in November, 2001 and included the following tasks:

- Three meetings with a Steering Committee (November 1/01, November 22/01, and February 19/02) to start up the process, review a first draft of the plan, and review public comments and the second draft of the plan. The Steering Committee was composed of: a Council/Commission member, Abbotsford staff from Parks, Planning, Properties and Engineering; and community representatives,
- A review of site conditions, noting changes since 1996,
- Review of draft Water Quality Plan for Mill Lake (CH2M Hill, August 2001), and information on conceptual wetlands and wet ponds for stormwater treatment (February, 2002),
- Review of land use, property ownership, property value and age of construction,
- Public open house and meeting January 15, 2002, public meeting on June 6, 2002, and other informal meetings with adjacent residents,
- Several presentations to the Parks Commission and Council in 2002 and 2003.

## **1.3 Goal**

The primary goal is to build upon Mill Lake Park's reputation as the "jewel" of the City of Abbotsford by:

- establishing a strong image for the park within the community,
- focusing park development on destination areas that provide facilities for picnics, play, and other uses within an attractive park-like setting dominated by trees and lawn,
- providing for a variety of recreation opportunities appropriate in a major destination lakeside park, such as walking, cycling, nature interpretation, and special events, including opportunities for people of all ages,
- protecting and enhancing environmental resources through use of different types of native vegetation and restoration of habitat, and



- serving the needs of the surrounding population for a tranquil refuge, especially since the population will be relatively dense in the future.

## 1.4 Issues

The following are issues related to the current state of Mill Lake Park, potential park acquisitions, and a park conceptual plan:

- given the incremental growth of Abbotsford leading to amalgamation with Matsqui, the need for a large City-wide park around Mill Lake was not anticipated or implemented in the past,



**Abbotsford Lake, 1908**



**Mill Lake, 1962**

- park is currently fragmented – separate parcels, not much cohesion, different construction details,
- park lacks visibility and identity from the road system,
- lack of destination points in the route around the lake,
- need for parking vs. potential intrusion of large paved areas within the park,
- portions of lake trail too narrow to accommodate the existing level of use and subject to flooding,
- the boardwalk is extremely slippery, and roller-bladers on the boardwalk cause a noise that some find disturbing,
- interest in increased recognition of the history of the lake,
- need to protect and enhance the riparian vegetation,
- need to manage the vegetation with respect to level of maintenance required,



**Flooded Path**

- problem with impacts of Canada Geese,
- interest in increased opportunities for wildlife viewing,
- concerns about water quality, primarily from the Canada Geese and stormwater outflows,



**Stormwater Outflows**

- need to manage use to minimize impacts on wildlife, e.g. eagle nest,
- various facilities in disrepair or outdated, e.g. picnic shelters, old rock walls, upper ballfield facilities, dock, John Mahoney play structures,



**Eagle's Nest**

- concerns about the quality and extent of signs in the park,



**Sign**

- parking lot on north side is too close to shoreline, and drains directly into the lake,
- drainage problem east of Centennial Park pool/play area,



**Parking near Shoreline**

- weakness of the connection between Trethewey House and the park,
- concern about displacing residents, particularly those with relatively new homes or new renovations,
- residents are concerned about the unsightliness of newly acquired properties due to the delay in maintaining and upgrading these areas,
- need to involve adjacent residents when planning park improvements, e.g. benches, lighting,
- concerns about safety, security and vandalism in the park.

## 2.0 PARK PROPERTY ACQUISITION

There were a number of objectives which guided the preparation of the acquisition plan (refer to pull-out plan next page). These are as follows:

- to acquire sufficient space around the lake where possible to allow for appropriate park development and to minimize the sense of crowding,
- to acquire a significant amount of frontage on surrounding roads so the park will establish a strong presence in the community,
- to acquire land to allow for development of new areas in the park,
- to retain some blocks of residential property adjacent to the park to allow for overseeing of the site,
- to retain relatively new homes until they have reached their typical lifespan, except where there may be only one or two such properties in a key park location, and
- to provide a better link between Trethewey House and the park.

Based on these objectives, the 15-year park acquisition plan was prepared. There are 25 single-family properties and one multi-family site with an older development identified for acquisition. Because density in the surrounding area will continue to increase, the property acquisition and conceptual development plans should be reviewed in 10 years.

## 3.0 PARK DEVELOPMENT

The conceptual park development plan (refer to pull-out plan at end of report) illustrates ideas for the future development of Mill Lake Park. The guiding principles and recommendations contained in this section provide direction for future park development.

### 3.1 Guiding Principles

1. Continue to abide by the conceptual framework for park development originally identified in the 1987 plan. The conceptual framework is a general guideline and exceptions will occur due to planning and design considerations. The framework includes three concentric zones as follows:
  - Shoreline zone approximately 15 metres in width beyond the high waterline. The focus of this zone will be retention, enhancement and restoration of native habitat. Small areas of more developed edge treatments may be appropriate in locations of high public use, but generally facilities in this zone will be limited to walkways, boardwalks, piers, and viewing structures.
  - Inner Park zone encircling the Shoreline zone, averaging 40 metres in width. The primary character of this zone will be a placid “park” character, with vegetation including grass with shade trees, as well as native tree and shrub plantings. The primary uses in this zone will be walking, cycling, picnicking and play.
  - Outer Park including all areas beyond the Inner Park. This zone is less influenced by the lake, but is important in extending the character of the park to the surrounding roads and neighbourhoods. Suitable vegetation will include the park-like and native plantings of the Inner Park, but may also include more ornamental planting or special vegetation types. This zone is the most appropriate location for parking and support facilities, e.g., washrooms.
2. Develop the park experience as a loop system with various destination points along the way. Provide parking and a variety of park facilities at the destination points.
3. Focus on activities that are available to the general public. Disallow new uses that require dedicated space for one user group (e.g., ballfields).
4. Develop the park with a strong focus on vegetation and wildlife habitat, providing a variety of different vegetation and habitat types within the park.
5. Use principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) to the degree possible, especially along major trails and in primary use areas. Consult with the police in the application of CPTED principles.

## 3.2 Park Development Recommendations

Park development recommendations are grouped according to specific topics. Primary recommendations are followed by more specific suggestions.

### Vegetation Management and Planting

Develop a vegetation enhancement and management plan for the park as a whole, considering maintenance requirements. The vegetation will range from the establishment of native plantings of different types, particularly along the lakeshore, to new shade trees. Part of the implementation of this will involve removal of plantings which are not compatible with the plan. New plantings may include: clumps of trees in grass, deciduous woodland, mixed forest, additional riparian plantings, old field/hedgerow habitat, and ornamental shrubs and flowers.

The following are some specific suggestions for vegetation management:

- Convert the slope below the Peardonville/Emerson ballfields entirely to native planting. A portion of the slope is currently mowed grass that is difficult to maintain and inappropriate in the context.
- Establish and enhance riparian planting along the shoreline wherever there is minimal existing plant material and no proposed new facility.
- Establish appropriate planting schemes focusing on trees in new park areas (e.g. Ware Street, Bevan Avenue) and those to be improved (e.g., Lindale Street, west side of lake open space, Bourquin Crescent West and Ware Street).
- Manage a portion of the agricultural area along Bevan as old field/hedgerow habitat.
- In areas of the park that are currently forested (e.g. east of Gladwin Street, northeast corner of Emerson and Bevan), develop a program of interplanting with young trees to ensure the continuation of forest in these areas.
- Develop and manage riparian plantings to accommodate views of the lake from the primary perimeter trail and major use areas. This needs to be balanced with the need for riparian thickets that provide wildlife refuge, and the need to control access onto the shore by Canada Geese at the view windows.
- Protect all high quality trees growing in the park. Design new facilities to protect these trees (including their root systems) during construction and in the long term, e.g. design parking lots with large islands where necessary and possible around existing trees, retain islands within pond/wetland features to support existing trees.



## Trail System

Continue to develop the lake perimeter multi-use trail, with connecting trails as appropriate.

- Due to the high level of use by various modes, develop the primary perimeter trail as a 4 metre wide paved surface. Investigate the use of an alternative material to asphalt to reduce stormwater impacts.<sup>1</sup>
- If the primary perimeter trail becomes so busy in the future that use conflicts occur and the peacefulness of walking is compromised, develop another trail farther from the lake to accommodate wheeled propulsion, except wheelchairs (e.g. bicycles, in-line skaters, skateboards).
- Disallow bicycles, skateboards and in-line skaters on boardwalks, and provide an alternate route.
- Limit connecting trails to essential routes. Develop connecting trails (i.e., not part of major loop trail) 1.5 to 3 metres wide depending on the level of use. Construct connecting trails from pervious materials (e.g. road mulch) to reduce stormwater impacts where universal accessibility is not essential.
- Develop secondary loop trails intended primarily for pedestrian use, to be accomplished partly through design, e.g. narrow width, sharper curves, pervious loose surface.
- Remove existing trails that are superfluous, e.g. in Lindale area.
- Use a non-slip surface, e.g. strip of expanded metal, over boardwalks.
- Consider elimination of the yellow centre line in future trail construction, especially along relatively straight sections of path with good visibility, in consultation with city risk management staff. This is to minimize the visual intrusion of the bright yellow line, and may warrant an experimental section with the alternate design standard.



---

<sup>1</sup> As one example, a product called Stabilizer, available from Soil Stabilization Products Co., creates a pervious paving surface that looks and behaves like well-compacted aggregate. It can be significantly cooler than asphalt, because of its lighter colour and is reported to cost about a third the cost of asphalt.

## **Parking**

Provide parking near the perimeter of the park to service users approaching from each direction (north, south, west and east), and minimize the visual and environmental impacts of the parking lots.

- Provide parking lots near surrounding roads for maximum visibility and security.
- Provide green space with tree planting between parking lots and major park facilities where possible to minimize the impact of the parking lot on park users.
- Consider new parking lot designs that minimize stormwater impacts (e.g. permeable paving or asphalt paving with drainage into bioswales).
- Include islands with tree and ground cover planting within parking lots to make them more attractive and park-like.

## **Roads**

Treat roads adjacent to the park as an extension of the park experience where possible.

- Provide wider sidewalks and boulevards with street trees adjacent to Mill Lake Park where possible. Use light standards that can accommodate banners.
- Treat the upgrading of Emerson Street as an opportunity to provide a special park-like character on the block between Bevan Avenue and Peardonville Road. This may include features such as green boulevards, tree planting, banners, and/or a widened sidewalk with viewing area overlooking the pool/play area.

## **Stormwater Management**

Design the park to minimize stormwater impacts, and take measures to treat some of the stormwater currently flowing into Mill Lake, based on information obtained from engineering studies.

- Design all new park facilities to drain stormwater directly into the ground where possible through measures such as: permeable surfaces, increased soil depths in infiltration areas, and drainage swales (which could be park features).
- Construct bioremediation ponds/wetlands for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake. These features are to be located generally as shown on the Conceptual Development Plan.

## **Upgrading of Structures and Furnishings**

Develop some standard details for use throughout the park, and others that are unique, and upgrade and replace park structures, based on the following suggestions:

- Develop a standard detail for picnic shelters, to be used for new shelters and replacements.



- Develop a standard detail for lighting, low wood barriers, railings, fences, benches and bicycle racks, and use these throughout the park.
- Use a colour scheme that blends in with the natural surroundings, and that minimizes the visibility of graffiti.
- Develop a signage system for the park, incorporating regulatory, warning, information, directional, and interpretive signs, in consultation with city risk management staff. Plan each sign to incorporate as much as possible of the necessary information in order to minimize the number of signs in the park.
- Locate places that encourage congregation (e.g., seating areas, parking lots) as far as possible from existing residences.

### **Lighting**

Provide low-intensity, pedestrian-scale lighting along the primary trails and at parking lots.

- Develop a lighting plan that provides the minimum illumination required for use of the primary trails during winter late afternoon and early evening.
- Ensure that light fixtures are located and designed so that they don't shine on residences.
- Consider the use of security lighting with motion sensors for after park closing.

### **Lindale Street/Bourquin Area**

Prepare a new plan for the Lindale Street/Bourquin area once property acquisition is complete, based on the following suggestions:

- Relocate the ballfield to a new location out of Mill Lake Park,
- Construct a new parking lot farther from the shoreline, and revegetate at least some of the area that is currently used for parking. Locate the parking along Lindale Street itself in the short term, and across Mill Lake Road once property acquisition is complete.
- Construct a bioremediation pond/wetland in this area for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake.
- Provide a drop-off for non-motorized boat launching.
- Construct a larger fishing pier, fully or partially covered.
- Provide a shoreline boardwalk (potentially overhanging the shoreline to prevent access by geese), to address current trampling of grass in an area with extensive tree roots.

- Construct a major picnic area in association with the peninsula viewpoint.
- East of the peninsula, construct a boardwalk or low wall along the shoreline to allow for riparian planting and to prevent access by geese.
- Construct a bioremediation pond/wetland along the shoreline near Bourquin for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake.



### **Ware Street Area**

Prepare a new plan for the Ware Street area, and expand upon it once property acquisition is complete, based on the following suggestions:

- Develop the corner of Ware Street and Bourquin Crescent West as parkland that includes trees, grass, riparian planting along the lakeshore, and potentially floral displays, water fountain feature, or sculpture/art. Develop a pathway that can provide an alternative to the boardwalk for wheeled modes of circulation. Work with the surrounding community to design the facilities within this area. Due to the large concentration of seniors, an option to consider is facilities to serve seniors, e.g., covered outdoor shelter, card playing tables, lawn bowling, shuffleboard, horseshoe pits.
- Provide a new parking lot along Ware Street.
- Provide clear access from the parking lot to Trethewey House and Kariton House.
- Consider renovation or redevelopment of Kariton House as a traditional style teahouse in combination with some arts programs.
- Expand the Trethewey House garden into the current location of the John Mahoney parking lot to increase its visibility from the park.
- Daylight the lake outflow and develop it as a more prominent park feature.
- Provide a new play area with a heritage focus to current standards that is more integrated with the park and the perimeter trail.

### **Bevan Avenue Area**

Prepare a new plan for the Bevan Avenue area once property acquisition is complete, based on the following suggestions:

- Design area to retain mature, high value trees, and manage a portion of area for old field/hedgerow habitat.
- Construct one or two parking lots along Bevan Avenue.

- Construct a path into the park, screening with vegetation, and a bioremediation pond/wetland between Ashley Way and Alta Avenue for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake.
- Construct a wetland/bog garden as a feature in this area (potentially with community participation). It may be possible to include some stormwater flow for bioremediation as part of this feature.
- Construct small viewing areas to the lake where there are breaks in the natural vegetation.
- Construct a bioremediation wetland swale north of the major loop path where shown for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake.
- Add a narrow secondary path with a gravel surface closer to the shoreline in this area for pedestrians only.
- Construct a picnic shelter and open grass area with some play facilities for informal play.
- Establish an entry to the park at the corner of Bevan and Ware, and extend the park character all along Bevan Avenue once property acquisition is complete.

#### **West Side – Low Level**

Upgrade and enhance the lower level of the west side of the lake, based on the following suggestions:

- Plant clumps of trees in the open grass area to provide more character and to assist in management of the drainage,
- Construct a small creek drainage course from the water spray park area to the riparian area to collect runoff and provide an interesting feature.
- Construct a new boardwalk with a viewing tower crossing the lake, with one portion parallel and alongside the previous railway trestle. Access to the boardwalk from the north should be located in the existing opening. The boardwalk will provide opportunities for wildlife viewing and historic interpretation. In the area between the boardwalk and the shoreline, construct a bioremediation pond/wetland for partial treatment of stormwater before it enters the lake.



**Abbotsford Lumber Company**

## **West Area – High Level (Gladwin/Peardonville/Emerson)**

Upgrade and enhance the high level areas northwest of the lake, based on the following suggestions:

- Provide one new parking lot, designed according to the suggestions contained in this document for parking lots. Provide the parking lot access across from the MSA Arena access.
- If space becomes available, develop the area as green space with trees suitable for informal play and picnicking. If there is an interest in formal gardens within the park, this would be an appropriate location.
- Remove parking from the forested area next to MSA Manor. Restore the vegetation and improve the trail connections in this area.
- Remove parking from the south forested area (Centennial Park) and restore vegetation.

## **Park Management**

Manage the park to protect the environmental and cultural resources, based on the following suggestions:

- Construct all new facilities to discourage use by Canada Geese including: thick scrub along shoreline where possible, overhanging structures at shoreline edge, minimize mowed grass especially near the shoreline, continue egg-addling program.
- Design the park to support only small, relatively quiet festivals as opposed to large, noisy gatherings to minimize impacts on the sensitive wildlife and vegetation.
- Retain adequate patrols through the park, particularly in summer, to discourage inappropriate activities, and to enforce rules, e.g. dogs on leash, use of doggy stations.
- Ensure that all City departments and people making property inquires are aware of the Mill Lake property acquisition plan and park development recommendations. For example, building permits for major property additions, improvements or redevelopment should be carefully considered and discussed with Parks and Recreation prior to approval.
- Retain close contact with the Engineering Department (that controls water levels) to minimize flooding of paths and other park features.
- Consult with neighbours on park improvements that are close to their property.

## **Park Name**

Establish one name for the park to increase its identity:

- Establish the name Mill Lake Park for the entire area contiguous with the lake.
- Recognize historic names and use areas within the park by naming of specific facilities or sites with a standard signage system, e.g. bronze marker. Some of these potential locations include: Centennial Pool, Trethewey House, site of previous “Lions” improvements, Kinsmen Water Park, John Mahoney play area.